

SPC Draft archiving policy April 2026

This document provides guidelines for the retention, disposal, and archival transfer of records by local authorities to ensure effective records management and compliance with legislation.

Overview of Retention Guidelines for Local Authorities

The document provides comprehensive guidelines for records management, retention, and disposal practices tailored for local authorities to ensure legal compliance, effective information management, and preservation of important records.

Transfer and Archival Storage Procedures

Guidelines for transferring permanent records to archives and ensuring compliance with legal and data protection requirements.

- **Permanent records should be offered to the local archive or record office.**
- Transfer procedures vary by archive collection policies; guidance is provided.
- Records about identifiable living individuals can be held indefinitely for research if specific conditions are met.
- Archivists may select samples of permanent records for preservation; the rest should be destroyed.
- Sensitive information in transferred records should be flagged, with closure periods aligned with legislation.
- No legal enforcement exists; authorities must ratify procedures internally via signatures of Chief Executive or Internal Auditor.

Record Destruction and Disposal Policies

Procedures for the destruction of records, including legal considerations and documentation.

- Records potentially involved in litigation should not be destroyed until litigation risks are cleared.
- A detailed register of destroyed records must be maintained.
- Records outside the scope of guidelines should be managed with legal or professional advice.
- Destruction should be documented with sufficient detail to identify records destroyed.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Record Management

Defines routine destruction of unimportant or duplicated records to streamline management.

- Applies to records with short-term or facilitative value, such as trivial emails, drafts, catalogues, and superseded documents.
- Electronic copies of hard copies and thermal faxes are also covered.
- Records used as evidence should not be destroyed under SOP.
- SOP should be integrated into quality management systems like ISO 9000.

Schedule Review and Further Resources

Guidelines are minimum standards and will be reviewed periodically.

- Regular reviews ensure relevance and compliance.
- Additional resources include professional bodies, government agencies, and experts for further guidance.

Disposal Guidelines for Specific Functions

Provides detailed disposal periods for various records related to democratic processes, management, client services, and other local authority functions.

- Election records: summary certification is permanent; ballot papers destroyed after 6 months.
- Council and committee records: minutes and agendas are often offered to archives; some are destroyed after 3-6 years.
- Records related to partnership, external meetings, and honours are generally offered to archives or destroyed after specified periods.
- Management activities like corporate planning, policy development, and public consultation have retention periods from 1 to 7 years, with many records offered to archives.
- Records concerning housing, land management, health and safety, and other public services follow similar detailed retention schedules, emphasizing legal compliance and historical value.

Legal and Contracts Record Management

Procedures for handling legal, contractual, and litigation records.

- Litigation files are destroyed 7 years after last action; major cases may be reviewed by archivists.
- Legal advice records are destroyed 3 years after last action unless they set a major precedent.
- Agreements between organizations are kept 6 years after expiry; contracts under seal for 12 years.
- Conveyancing files are retained 12 years post-closure.
- Contract and tender records have specific retention periods, e.g., 2 years for pre-contract advice, 6-12 years for contracts.
- Tender documents are destroyed 1 year after contract start.
- Contract management records are kept 6-12 years after expiry.

Human Resources Record Disposal

Guidelines for employee and personnel records.

- Employee summary systems are permanent; transferred to archives after use.
- Disciplinary, health, and training records have specific retention periods, e.g., 6 months to 50 years depending on the record.
- Staff termination records are destroyed 6 years after departure.
- Employee personal and employment files are retained for specified periods, e.g., 6-25 years.

Financial Management Record Retention

Standards for financial transactions, accounts, and audit records.

- Annual financial reports are permanent; transferred to archives.
- Monthly and quarterly reports are destroyed after use.
- Purchase approvals are destroyed 7 years after the financial year.
- Records of receipts, invoices, and cash flow are retained 6 years.
- Taxation and payroll records are kept 5-7 years.
- Asset registers and management reports are permanent or destroyed 2-7 years after use.

Property and Land Management Records

Guidelines for managing property, land, and development records.

- Property reports are permanent; transferred to archives.
- Acquisition and disposal files are retained 12-15 years after obligations end.
- Building and development project records are kept 7-15 years.
- Lease agreements are destroyed 15 years after expiry.
- Management of special interest buildings is permanent.
- Land use surveys and planning schemes are permanent.
- Building permits are destroyed 15 years after completion; enforcement notices after 3 years.

Public Services and Emergency Planning Records

Management of health, safety, and emergency response records.

- Equipment inspections are destroyed 6 years after equipment disposal.
- Monitoring and safety assessments are destroyed 3-50 years depending on the type.
- Major incident reports are permanent.
- Minor incident reports are destroyed 7 years after closure.
- Licensing, registration, and certification records are permanent or destroyed 2-25 years after lapse.
- Hazardous substances and care registration records are permanent or kept for 25-60 years.
- Accident and injury records are destroyed 3-25 years after closure.

Index and Record Reference System

Provides an extensive index of record types and their corresponding reference numbers for easy retrieval and management.

- Includes records from council minutes, reports, registers, correspondence, and legal documents.
- Ensures comprehensive coverage of all record categories for proper disposal and retention.

Administrative and Operational Records

Includes records related to staffing, training, and operational management.

- Recruitment interview notes are retained for 6.25 years.
- Statutory appointment records, including applicant registers and vacancy records, are retained for 6.25 years.
- Training certificates and exam results are retained for 6.21 years.
- Systems management implementation plans are retained for 8.12 years.
- Transport management fleet authorizations are retained for 8.14 years.

Miscellaneous and Other Records

Covers various other records such as signage, orders, and miscellaneous files.

- Street signs, street load limits, and traffic orders are retained for 11.8 and 11.6 years.

- Tenders documents, quotations, and specification records have specific retention periods, e.g., 4.6 to 4.10 years.
- Tree preservation orders are retained for 10.7 years.
- Voting records are retained for 1.3 years.